

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-4

NEW YORK TIMES
9 JANUARY 1982

U.S. Belittles Soviet Spy Charges

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Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Jan. 8 — The Communist Party newspaper Pravda said today that Soviet intelligence had exposed a large group of American spies working under the guise of diplomats in Moscow, but the cases cited by the paper were all at least five years old.

The Americans named by Pravda included Martha D. Peterson, who was expelled amid much Soviet publicity in 1973, and Vincent and Becky Crockett, who left in 1977. Pravda also named a Kelly, and United States Embassy sources said Edmund W. Kelly had served as a military attaché until 1975.

An embassy spokesman declined to comment on the Pravda report. Privately, embassy sources described it as "old stuff."

But the article carried many previously unreported details about the case of Vladimir G. Kalinin, a Leningrad resident who, according to Soviet press accounts, was caught spying for the United States and executed in 1975.

Seen as Retaliation Against U.S.

Presenting the case as a tribute to Soviet security agents, Pravda said Mr. Kalinin was under surveillance from the time he first approached a guide at an

American exhibition, and that he was finally exposed by his mother.

The vintage of the examples cited, as well as the fact that some have been publicized before, led Western diplomats to surmise that the article was published largely in retaliation for American accusations that the number of Soviet spies in the United States is on the rise.

William H. Webster, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said last Sunday that about 35 percent of Soviet diplomats in the United States were trained for K.G.B. intelligence work. The Washington Post also recently reported that Dmitry Yakushkin, a Soviet diplomat recently returned from Washington to Moscow, had been head of K.G.B. operations in the United States.

The Soviet press periodically recounts the story of a Soviet citizen caught spying, evidently as a warning of the dangers of dealing with foreigners and of the futility of hoping to evade discovery. Mr. Kalinin, like most previous subjects of such accounts, is portrayed as a greedy, immoral opportunist who starts on the road to betrayal by listening to Western short-wave radio broadcasts.